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Selected Aspects of Social Policy in Poland in the Process of Integration with the European Union

Abstract

The paper attempts to analyse both costs and benefits of Poland's accession to the European Union in the area of social policy and their impact on the size of labour force migration. The analysis is focussed on issues of economic and social effects of implementation of EU regulations in Polish law in the field of policy of equal rights for men and women, employment policy, work health and safety and a social dialogue. In addition, impact of adjustments in the area of social policy on the size of labour force migration from Poland to EU member countries was identified.

Comparative analyses of various indicators characteristic for different areas of social policy were carried out on the basis of available statistical data for Poland and selected European Union countries. The findings point to the problem of uneven distribution of costs and benefits over the time, where two scenarios are possible. The choice of particular scenario depends on preferences of the society. The estimates of costs and benefits connected with adjustments of Polish labour legislation and social security to EU requirements assume an average period of 5 to 7 years from the moment of becoming EU member. The need to treat the implementation and realisation of EU social policy standards as a continuous process based on a social dialogue with economic and social partners is underlined.

Introduction

The approaching perspective of Poland's membership in the European Union implies adjustment activities to EU requirements in the field of social policy be more intensified. These encompass specific changes in the Polish social law, which aim to comply with EU regulations and social rights and to realise particular social commitments in the socio-economic life.

The main goal of this piece of work is to analyse costs and benefits of Poland's accession to the European Union in the area of social policy as well as their impact on the size of labour force migration. Economic and social effects of implementation of EU regulations in Polish law in such areas of social policy as policy of equal rights for men and women, employment policy, health and safety of work and social dialogue were identified. Also the impact of adjustments in the field of social policy on the size of labour force migration from Poland to EU member countries was shown.

In order to justify the necessity of implementation of EU law regulations into practice, comparative analyses of many different indicators characteristic for the investigated areas of social policy were carried out. The analyses were made on the basis of available statistical data for Poland and selected European Union countries.

The paper consists of five sections. In the first section issues associated with enforcement of policy of equal rights for men and women in Poland were presented. In the second section adjustments in the field of employment policy were discussed. The third section is related to health and safety of work, while the fourth section to a social dialogue issue. In the fifth section an analysis of the impact of Poland's accession to the European Union on the size of labour force migration was presented. Costs and benefits connected with adjustments in Polish legislation to EU requirements were identified in summary. It is worth underlining that the application of main social values despite certain initial costs secures important benefits in the future such as employment growth, an increase in social safety and the strengthening of democracy principles.

1. Adjustments in the field of policy of equal rights for men and women

The principle of equal treatment of men and women in employment is regulated in EU legal provisions, as well as in the Polish system of labour law¹. Its practical execution becomes particularly important in the conditions of a deteriorating labour market situation manifested in an employment decline and unemployment growth. The analysis of changes occurring in the Polish labour market shows that in spite of formal equality of chances for men and women in the labour market women belong to a group of those persons that are particularly threatened in this market. Therefore, it is worth having a closer look at data included in Table 1 which present employment rates of men and women in Poland throughout 1996–2000, where the basis for comparisons is provided by indicators characteristic for the European Union.

Table 1. Employment rates in Poland and in the European Union, in % of population aged 15–64

Employment rate	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total					
Poland	51.2	51.5	51.0	48.0	47.4
EU - 15	60.3	60.7	61.4	62.1	63.1
Women					
Poland	43.8	44.0	43.9	40.7	40.3
EU - 15	50.4	50.8	51.5	52.6	53.8
Men					
Poland	59.4	59.8	58.9	55.9	55.2
EU - 15	70.3	70.5	71.2	71.6	72.4

Source: Aktywność ekonomiczna ludności Polski [The economic activities of the Polish population], IV quarter 2000, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2001, p. XXXV–XXXVII; Employment in Europe 2000, Luxembourg 2000, p. 85.

¹ An important role is played by the Council directive 75/117/EEC of 10 February 1975 on the introduction of an „equal pay principle” for men and women, as well as by the Council directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on equal treatment of men and women in the area of employment accessibility, training and professional promotion. In the Polish system of labour law, the principle of equal treatment of men and women in employment finds its reflection in the new labour code being in force since 1 January 2002 (“Journal of Laws”, No. 128, item 1405).

As it results from data included in Table 1, the rate of women employment in Polish economy is predominantly lower throughout all years under analysis than the rate of men employment by about 15 percentage points. In addition, downward trends in the total employment rate connected with the weakening of the rate of economic growth since 1998, contributed to the decline in the women employment rate, yet relatively lower than the rate for men.

In the European Union countries different tendencies took place in the analysed period, expressed by an increase in the total employment rate and an increase in the employment rate of men and women in the population aged 15–64. As a matter of fact, the women employment rate in the European Union is still relatively lower than the rate for men, however, its progressive growth shows that actual chances for women in the labour market in job accessibility improve. Undoubtedly, it is caused by practical enforcement of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in the labour market in the field of job accessibility, professional training, creation of proper work conditions and systems of social security (Głabicka 1999, p. 87–88). Moreover, as it is recommended in many programmes member countries should reinforce, where necessary, the measures securing equality of men and women in employment.

The equality of chances, which means the necessity to give up discrimination practices in the labour market, particularly towards women and ethnic minorities, and an improvement in employment abilities provide basic pillars of the European employment strategy adopted during the extraordinary summit in Luxembourg in 1997 (Kryńska 2001, p. 40–41)². Member countries became committed to work out National Action Plans for Employment. Simultaneously, the best examples of “good practice” in employment commenced to be promoted (Piotrowski 2001). In the case of women, attention was paid to the necessity of adjustments in the labour law to their specific needs, which facilitate a reconciliation of professional work with family duties, mainly childcare. The Netherlands provides a model example, where 60% of women work 2–3 days a week, which resulted in a decrease in the unemployment rate in this country from 7.3% in 1994 to 4.4% in 1999 (Głabicka 2001, p. 252). An important role can be played by other flexible forms of employment, such as part-time work, tele-work, work based on contracts for a definite period,

² The two remaining pillars, providing the criteria for enforcement of employment policy include growth of entrepreneurship and improvement of adaptation capabilities of firms and working persons to changing conditions in the labour market through permanent education and organisational changes. Actions adopted in favour of employment growth result from the Amsterdam Treaty provisions signed in 1997, which came into effect on 1 May 1999, where it is stressed that a sustainable high level of employment is a priority goal of member countries, equally important as macroeconomic goals, i.e. economic growth and stabilization (Wiśniewski 1999).

work hire, which facilitate to reconcile a professional life with a family life by employees (women and men) based on a voluntary choice and non-discrimination in the field of employment conditions. They have already become subject of EU law regulations or of activities of the European Commission and the European Social partners (Matey-Tyrowicz 2001, p. 1).

Polish legislation is not at variance with European Union norms. Moreover, in the National Strategy of Employment Growth and Human Resources Development for 2000–2006, adopted by the government on 4 January 2000, the importance of, *inter alia*, such goals as an improvement in employability and reinforcement of policy of equality of chances in the labour market is highlighted (Rynek pracy 1999). It is, however, about a removal of actual inequalities, which diminish the chances of women in job accessibility. Actions in this field seem to be necessary as still many employers prefer to hire men to women because they think women are less at their disposal and also in order to avoid burden of social rights given to female employees performing their maternity functions (Socha, Sztanderska 2000, p. 254). Some vacancies are still just reserved for men irrespective of the level of education and skills of women. It is underlined (cf. Gierasimczyk 1998, p. 83) that chances of women to find employment are lower than of men, due to the following reasons:

- their professional and spatial mobility is limited due to family duties,
- women returning from professional inactivity do not have complete readiness for work due to decapitalization of their knowledge and skills or lack of attractiveness of learned job,
- predominating forms of employment are too rigid, there is little part-time work or temporary work,
- an insufficiently developed service sector poses a barrier for women employment growth.

Evidence of the unfavourable situation of women in the Polish labour market is also given by relatively high unemployment rates, both throughout periods of economic growth and deterioration in the economic situation. Data on that is presented in Table 2.

As it can be seen, throughout the entire analysed period the unemployment rates for women in Poland were higher than the unemployment rates for men. A similar tendency can be noticed in the European Union, although a downward tendency in unemployment rates, particularly as regards women, but also men, shows a practical implementation of the principle of equal chances for both genders in employment. In the Polish labour market, an increase in unemployment rates which has been taking place since 1998 concerned especially the women population.

Table 2. Unemployment rates of men and women in Poland and in the European Union in the years 1996–2000, in %

European Union				
Unemployment rate	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total	10.8	10.6	9.9	9.2
Women	12.4	12.3	11.7	10.9
Men	9.6	9.3	8.6	7.9
Poland				
Unemployment rate	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total	11.5	10.2	10.6	15.3
Women	13.4	12.0	12.2	18.1
Men	9.9	8.7	9.3	13.0

Source: Employment in Europe 2000, Luxembourg 2000, s. 85. Aktywność ekonomiczna ludności Polski [The economic activities of the Polish population], Central Statistical Office, Warsaw, different issues from the years 1997–2001.

Despite of the fact that unemployed women were better educated than unemployed men were, they experienced unemployment on a more frequent basis. Between 1999–2001 at least secondary education had 37–39% of unemployed women, while this was a case with 16–21.5% of men (Aktywność ekonomiczna ludności Polski, 2001). Having a tertiary education level is not an efficient protection from unemployment for women. Throughout 1996–2001 the proportion of unemployed women with highest skills in the total number of unemployed women ranged from 2.3 to 3.8%, while it was between 1.2 and 2.5% for men.

The impact of gender on a threat with unemployment is also noticeable in the shares of women in long-term unemployment (cf. Table 3).

As it follows from data included in Table 3, the proportion of long-term unemployed (remaining over 12 months without work) in the European Union is high in spite of a continuing downward tendency. In Poland the indicators of the share of such unemployed in total unemployment were even lower than the average indicators of the share for member countries between 1996–2000, however, since 2000 they have tended to grow again (in June 2001 – 46.6%). A long-term nature of unemployment proves to be an important problem for unemployed women, both in the European Union and in Poland. Although among all unemployed women the proportion of long-term unemployed women was lower in Poland than in EU countries on average, already in the year

2000 the indicators of the share converged (ca. 46%), while in the year 2001 the share grew to 48.3%. In EU countries the proportion of long-term unemployed women has lowered systematically since 1997.

Table 3. Long-term unemployment of women in Poland and in the European Union in the years 1996–2000, in % of the total number in particular group

Employment rate	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Long-term unemployed					
EU - 15	48.2	49.0	47.9	46.0	45.2
Poland	41.0	44.3	40.4	38.7	44.6
Women					
EU - 15	50.2	50.7	49.2	47.3	46.3
Poland	43.0	37.9	40.7	33.1	45.8

Source: Aktywność ekonomiczna ludności Polski [The economic activities of the Polish population], IV quarter 2001, p. LVII, own calculations; Eurostat Yearbook, 2002, p. 113.

Long-term unemployed women form a group that is particularly threatened by unemployment and worse positioned in the labour market. Their chances to flow out of the unemployment stock are lowest, as potential employers perceive these people as little productive, with very low or out-of-date skills, resourceless and little active. A part of these women, discouraged by a long lasting search for work and usually not entitled to obtain an unemployment benefit, decide to move to the stock of professionally inactive persons. Therefore, the European Employment Strategy highlights the need for improvement of employment capacity and better access to work for unemployed threatened by long-term unemployment and improvement of instruments addressed to help this group of persons (Wiśniewski 2000, p. 276–277). Owing to this, important directives for this kind of activities are reflected in the National Employment Strategy for Poland. As necessary, one considers an introduction of solutions that would facilitate a return to work of women, particularly those long-term unemployed, in the form of e.g. preparatory training, introduction of a so called transitional period to gradually master work standards, preferences in the system of acquiring and improving skills, as well as conducting an information campaign for stopping discrimination practices of employers.

Unemployed women are also predominant among young people aged 15–24. It is especially worrying in the case of Polish economy, where

unemployment rates for women increased in the analysed years from 29.5% in 1996 to 37% in 1999, while for men from 23.4% to 28.5% respectively (*Aktywność ekonomiczna ludności Polski*, IV quarter 2000, p. LX–LXII). The average rate of unemployment among young people in Poland amounted to 32.5% in 1999 and it nearly doubled the EU average rate which was 17.9% (Eurostat 2000, p. 148).

In order to improve the situation of young people in the labour market, in numerous Communities' documents the need to secure appropriate vocational education and the conditions to acquire best possible skills in relation to intellectual and physical capacities is stressed. Women with no work experience or with work experience up to one year were particularly strong affected by unemployment. Therefore, employees are reluctant to employ them. In 1996 women with no work experience constituted 18.4% of the total number of unemployed women, while in 2001 as many as 26.3% (men – 16.7% in 1996 and 20.9% in 2001). In this situation an essential role should be played by “first work” programmes for graduates, financed out of the Labour Fund and special training sessions including vocational guidance, elements of law basics, learning and preserving vocational and practical skills. Member countries have to report annually on the implementation of recommendations aimed to reduce unemployment among young people. Actual activities undertaken in Polish economy can, likewise in member countries, be an important factor to increase skill, professional and spatial mobility of young persons, especially that of women, and to increase their chance for employment.

To summarise it should be said that all this underlines the need for implementation of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in the labour market. Although the idea of gender is strongly articulated in the normative and consultative activities of the Council of Europe and the European Union, it is still necessary to apply and reinforce activities that warrant their execution. Poland's full membership in the European Union gives such hope.

Already in the preaccession period the National Strategy of Employment and Human Resources Growth was prepared. This strategy highlights the importance of the goal to secure equal chances for men and women in employment. The assumptions accepted by the Communities in the formation of the national programme give the possibility to take them into account while executing them. This is important due to a worse situation of women than men in the labour market in Poland, which is reflected in a relatively low rate of their employment, a high unemployment rate and the duration of the period of their unemployment.

The amendments introduced in the Polish labour code also take into consideration appropriate EU legal standards, which serve realisation of the

principle of equal treatment of men and women in fulfilment of family obligations based on partnership in order to reconcile professional and family life (giving a leave to one of the parents to hold care over baby or unpaid leave up to 3 months). Provided that Poland does not join the European Union, this problem would be diminished and probably the division of family and professional obligations would still be based on the gender criterion.

Future accession affects the change in the existing approach to the implementation of policy of employment growth and fighting unemployment among women. Importance of easier access to training after a longer break in work and to the system of social security, introduction of flexible forms of employment (part-time work), bigger possibilities for self-employment or participation in used special programmes of active labour market policy are underlined.

2. Adjustments in the field of employment policy and their consequences

The goal of employment policy carried out by the European Union specified in the Amsterdam Treaty and further documents is to strive for achievement of a sustainable and high level of employment. In addition, an assumption is made that common social policy should lead to improvement of not alone work conditions, but also living standards of employees.

In compliance with the Council's directive no. 104 dated 23 November 1993, one of the changes that are going to be introduced in the Polish labour law after joining the European Union in the field of employment policy is going to be a change of the weekly working time. The Council's directive 93/104/WE introduces a limitation to the combined working time (encompassing a normal work resulting from the norms of working time and work in overtime) of 48 hours a week (unless the worker agrees to extend the working time). Moreover, it specifies that the number of overtime hours cannot exceed 150 during the calendar year.

Advantageous changes consist in introduction of at least 15-minute breaks for persons working at least six consecutive hours. These breaks are included in working time. In addition, the directive imposes an obligation to secure an employee for a daily rest in the amount of at least 11 consecutive hours. Throughout a week, an employee has the right to a continuous rest in the amount of at least 35 hours (cf. Draft Act on alterations in Labour Code and alterations in some other acts; www.mpips.gov.pl).

However, shortening of a weekly working time can raise the level of labour costs (Golinowska et al. 1999, p. 15), which in turn can result in

the reduction of the employment size. These costs can also increase as a result of extending the minimum period of paid vacation leaves for employees. According to the directive 93/104/WE, member countries are obliged to secure to all employees who worked at least one year paid vacation leaves in the amount of at least 20 days. These leaves cannot be substituted by financial benefits, with the exception of termination of the work relationship. The norms currently in force in Poland specify the amount of vacation leaves for employees who worked one year as 18 days (Labour code, 2003, p. 66).

Another alteration that is going to take place after the introduction of EU norms and regulations is a change in the length of parental leaves. The directive 96/34/WE recommends solutions more beneficial than those currently in force in Poland. It contains a point concerning the right to return to the same or equal position. In Poland one is entitled to a three-year child care leave and two-year child care benefit until the child is 4 years old. In the EU this leave is at least 3 months, but it can be extended until the child is 8 years old. For employers, particularly owners of small and medium-sized enterprises this is going, however, to mean additional, quite considerable costs.

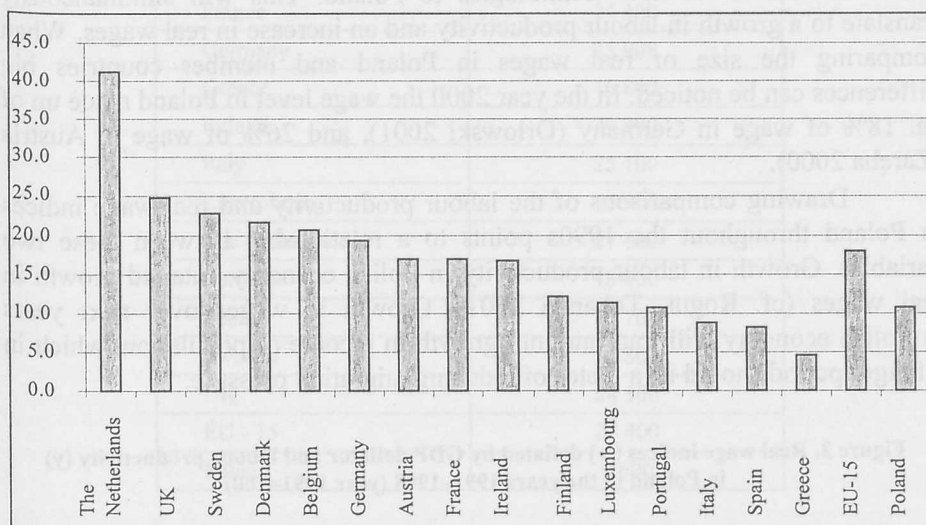
An essential change, which is going to be introduced, is the possibility of additional leave for female employees who are pregnant, after child birth and breast-feeding (directive 92/85). The EU legislation stipulates here that if it is not possible to adjust work conditions in the field of safety and it is impossible to transfer the female employee to another safer position, she is entitled to go for a leave during the whole period necessary to protect her health and safety. Polish regulations of the labour law being in force so far do not foresee such leave, therefore the above change are going to be advantageous for these female employees.

Important and beneficial alterations are going to be introduced in part-time employment. They concern the freedom of undertaking part-time work and the ban to use discrimination practices while establishing the employment conditions for part-time workers (cf. Draft Act on alterations in Labour Code and alterations in some other acts). The above changes in the labour code can contribute to make the labour market in Poland more flexible. Greater flexibility of the labour market can be assisted by employers' creation of new, flexible forms of employment: part-time work, occasional work, work in more than one place of work, work on one's own account, work within the framework of labour market programmes, work at home and telework (cf. Rogut, Tokarski 2001). In Polish economy the share of people working part-time is significantly lower than in the European Union (cf. Figure 1).

The highest proportion of part-time workers among EU member countries is recorded in the Netherlands (42% of all working persons). In Poland

in 2000 the share of part-time workers was at the level of 10.8% (Aktywność Ekonomiczna Ludności Polski 2000; according to data from Statistical Yearbooks it is 9.4%). Poland's accession to the European Union and assimilation of EU norms can help increase flexibility of the labour market. A benefit resulting from the growth in the share of part-time employees is mainly the possibility to reconcile the family and professional life, which is particularly important for persons with small children, for whom taking up a full-time work would be impossible. Increasing the possibilities of working part-time will thereby translate, firstly, to greater income of these persons, and secondly, to the employment growth.

Figure 1. Proportion of part-time employed in Poland and in the European Union countries (in % of total employed; data for the year 2000)



Source: Eurostat Yearbook, 2002, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, p.104 oraz Aktywność Ekonomiczna Ludności Polski [The economic activities of the Polish population], 2000 (average of four quarters, own calculations).

The growth of employment can also result from further and faster inflow of investment from member countries to Poland. Investment from member countries made up of 63.3% of investment with foreign capital participation in the year 2000. It is estimated that 55% of foreign investment value was placed in fixed assets (Prawo Przedsiębiorcy, 2001, p.7).

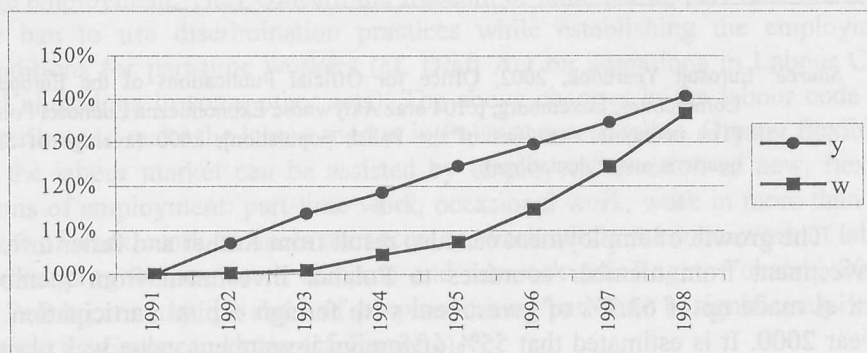
Table 4. Cumulated value of foreign investment (in million USD, as of 31 December)

Total	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
	3,215	4,917	7,779	14,020	20,587	30,642	38,951	49,652	56,833
Of which: over 1 million USD	2,830	4,320	6,831	12,028	17,705	27,280	35,171	45,772	53,152

Source: List of largest foreign investors in Poland, Polish Foreign Investment Agency, 1999; World Investment Report 1997; Transformacja społeczno-gospodarcza w Polsce {Socio-economic transition in Poland, RCSS, Warsaw 2002.

The growth in investment will be connected with modernisation of fixed assets and inflow of new technologies to Poland. This will simultaneously translate to a growth in labour productivity and an increase in real wages. When comparing the size of real wages in Poland and member countries big differences can be noticed. In the year 2000 the wage level in Poland made up of ca. 18% of wage in Germany (Orłowski 2001), and 26% of wage in Austria (Zaręba 2000).

Drawing comparisons of the labour productivity and real wage indices in Poland throughout the 1990s points to a relationship between these two variables. Growth in labour productivity in Polish economy entailed growth in real wages (cf. Rogut, Tokarski 2001). Growth in wages over next years in Polish economy will translate into growth in income of population, which in a longer period should be a factor of reducing migration pressure.

Figure 2. Real wage indices (w) deflated by GDP deflator and labour productivity (y) in Poland in the years 1991–1998 (year 1991=100)

Source: Own calculation on the basis of Concise Statistical Yearbook 1999, p. 413, 425.

Current income of population (measured by GDP *per capita*) is at a significantly lower level than income of residents of the European Union countries (cf. Table 5). When comparing gross domestic product *per capita* in Poland and in member countries it can be seen that its size in our economy makes up of ca. 39% of GDP *per capita* in the European Union.

Table 5. GDP *per capita* in Poland and EU member countries (measured by purchasing power parity; in USD)

Austria	27 000
Belgium	26 200
Denmark	29 100
Finland	25 200
France	24 400
Germany	25 900
Greece	16 800
Ireland	29 200
Italy	25 100
Luxembourg	46 900
The Netherlands	27 800
Portugal	18 000
Spain	20 100
Sweden	24 800
UK	24 500
EU - 15	24 400
Poland	9 600

Source: www.oecd.org

Summarising it can be said that the majority of changes in the regulations of the Polish labour law will be advantageous for employees. However, a decrease in the weekly working time without a decline in wages or an extension of leaves will translate into the growth of labour costs, which can result in reductions in employment. This may particularly affect small and medium-sized enterprises, for which these costs may prove to be quite a big burden.

Costly can also be an introduction of regulations concerning extended parental leaves and regulations related to pregnant female employees, female employees after child birth and breast-feeding employees. These costs (at least

partly) will have to be born by government. Otherwise enterprises could avoid employing women (cf. Golinowska et al. 1999, p. 20).

However, the introduction of new regulations can bring a considerable increase in employment, connected with setting more flexible norms of working time in EU legislation. Regulations of employment in non-typical forms of employment can translate into making the labour market more flexible and an employment growth.

3. The analysis of costs and benefits of Poland's accession into the European Union in the field of work health and safety

One of the most important aims of social policy carried out in the EU-15 countries is to increase work safety of employed persons. EU directives decide on the introduction of measures to improve health and safety of employees during their work, the protection of employees from the risk connected with an exposure to operation of cancer making factors in the work environment and the protection from the risk connected with an exposure to operation of biological and chemical factors at work.

Unfortunately, the implementation of EU norms will be connected with quite serious costs. Poland has demanded a 3-year transitional period until 31 December 2005 in relation to the directive 89/655/EEC on the minimum requirements of health and safety of using machinery by employees (cf. www.negocjacje.gov.pl).

The first kind of costs associated with the implementation of EU norms that will take place is investment costs connected with modernisation of obsolete machinery in Poland (Golinowska et al. 1999, p. 17). The largest problems in this area can have small enterprises, for which an exchange of machines will bring big costs. The degree of consumption of fixed assets, and particularly technological equipment, is quite high in Polish economy. In 2000 the degree of consumption of fixed assets in general was 47.2%, of which machinery – 58.5%. In addition, throughout the 1990–1999 period the rate of capital exchange was at the annual average level of 0.7%. Comparing to member countries it was at a very low level (in Germany it was 4.1%, and in France – 2.6%). The relationship of liquidation ratios to renewal ratios in the years 1990–2000 in Poland ranged from 0.12 to 0.18, while in developed countries it was 0.5% on average (Transformacja..., 2002, p. 101–102).

In the longer term modernisation of machinery will exert a positive influence on not only modernisation of production apparatus, but also safety

of employees. Benefits, which both employees and employers will gain, is mainly a smaller number of accidents at work, which will translate into a decrease in employees' absence caused by injuries.

Over the 1990s a significant decline in the number of accidents among persons working in Poland, including also a decrease in the number of fatal accidents can be noticed (cf. Table 6). This translated into a fall in the number of days not worked due to sickness. However, when comparing the accidents rates in Poland and in the EU, it can be noticed that this rate in the EU is at a lower level (in 1998 the proportion of accidents per 1,000 employees resulting in a longer than 3 days absence at work was at the level of 4.1; cf. EU Employment, 2001, p. 35). The rate of fatal accidents in the EU in 1998 reached 0.03. It is estimated that in a longer run a decline in the number of accidents and associated expenses will take place, and benefits from improvement of work health and safety will surely exceed the costs.

Table 6. Persons injured in accidents at work (per 1 000 employed)

	1990	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total	8.36	9.92	10.33	9.86	8.42	8.37
of which:						
- in fatal accidents	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.05
- in accidents resulting in an inability to work over 3 days	8.04	9.51	9.87	9.40	8.01	7.91

Source: Statistical Yearbook, Central Statistical Office, different issues from the years 1991–2001.

Table 7. Some reasons for accidents at work (excluding private farms in agriculture)

The reasons for accidents	1997	1998	1999	2000
Effects of harmful chemical substances and other material agents	10 032	9 866	7 898	7 431
Not using protective equipment	4 313	4 135	3 446	3 258
Incorrect employee action	99 046	99 580	85 942	84 494

Source: Statistical Yearbook, Central Statistical Office, different issues from the years 1991–2001.

A significant decrease in the proportion of persons working in hazardous conditions can also be seen (cf. Table 8), which translates into improvement of safety of persons employed.

Table 8. Persons working in hazardous conditions (per 1,000 employed; as of 31 December)

1995	1997	1998	1999	2000
167	157	149	143	140

Source: Statistical Yearbook, Central Statistical Office, different issues from the years 1991–2001.

Another group of costs, which employers will have to bear, is operating costs connected with ensuring that work health and safety norms are met in a given enterprise e.g. conducting required doctor's examination (Golinowska et al. 1999, p. 17).

The third group of costs associated with improvement of health and safety at work place is institutional costs related with necessity to reinforce state-managed institutions governing the implementation of work health and safety norms (Golinowska et al. 1999, p. 17). When comparing data concerning activities of the National Labour Inspectorate (Table 9), an increase in the number of conducted control actions and a growth in the number of decisions issued concerning correction of offences can be noticed. On the one hand, it gives evidence to greater detectability of any offences, but on the other hand this means that the number of offences is still high. In addition, there is also a possibility that the costs of activities run by the National Labour Inspectorate will increase due to a suggested new competence concerning giving permissions to interested firms to "employ" children in the field of cultural, artistic, sports and advertising activities (cf. Draft Act on alterations..., www.mpips.gov.pl).

Table 9. Activities of the National Labour Inspectorate

Activities	1997	1998	1999	2000
Number of inspections	78 096	81 495	81 874	85 424
Decisions issued*	551 287	590 262	556 674	597 004

* Concerning correction of offences in a specified period, suspension of work or transfer of employees to other works

Source: Statistical Yearbook, Central Statistical Office, different issues from the years 1991–2001.

4. The importance of a social dialogue

Institutions of a social dialogue in member countries have a long history. The social dialogue is very complex containing many issues and is connected with the creation and implementation of social policy and economic strategy. The social dialogue also aims to maintain the balance between economic and social development (Getka 2002, p. 37). Poland initiated and conducts the social dialogue, whose parties are employees' organisations, employer's organisations and the government. However, it is not as complex as it is the case in EU countries. The reasons for these differences do not lie on the side of regulations, as the majority of these meets EU norms, but rather results from the lack of their practical application.

The implementation of the remaining regulations concerning the social dialogue will rather not entail a considerable increase in expenditures. The introduction of the directive 77/187 concerning an obligation to inform the employees' representatives about the sales of the enterprise may serve as an example (Golinowska et al. 1999, p. 21).

Comparing the data about trade unionism in the European Union and in Poland two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, trade unionism in Poland is much less developed than in member countries (cf. Table 10). Secondly, comparing data concerning previous periods it can be said that trade unions undergo a crisis. In the middle of 1980s trade unionism in Poland amounted to 50% (Getka 2002, p. 38).

Table 10. Rate of trade unionism in Poland, selected European Union countries and average in the EU (in % of hired employees)

UK	30
Germany	27
EU-15	31
Poland	18

Source: K. Getka *Dialog społeczny i kryzys związków zawodowych w Polsce* [The social dialogue and the crisis of trade unions in Poland], *Polityka społeczna* [Social policy] No. 5–6/2002.

However, it can be seen that the number of collective litigation in Poland dealt with participation of a mediator from the list of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was significantly bigger over the last years than without any mediator (cf. Table 11).

Table 11. Statistics of collective litigations

Collective litigations	1998	1999	2000	2001
Litigations registered and finalised without participation of any mediator from the list of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	51	46	58	38
Litigations registered and finalised with participation of a mediator from the list of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	60	75	102	64

Source: www.mpips.gov.pl

The decreasing rate of trade unionism and still a considerable number of registered litigations points to the need for an increased role of a social dialogue in Poland and its practical application.

5. The influence of Poland's accession to the European Union on the size of labour force migrations

EU enlargement with the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries brings a lot of concern among residents of the EU-15. One of the more often mentioned concerns is fear of a big migration wave of population from countries joining the EU and flooding the labour markets of member countries by cheap and not skilled labour force. These concerns to a large extent refer to Poland. In German reports Poland is listed as the main country of employees' emigration (Report of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation..., 2000).

The main reasons, which can exert its influence on an increase of migration pressure, include *inter alia*:

- a significantly lower living standard in candidate countries as compared with member countries;
- a considerable lower wage level in candidate countries as compared with EU countries;
- the labour market situation in Poland – high unemployment both registered and hidden in Poland;
- a large increase in labour force, which will take place in CEE countries in the coming years.

However, the results of the majority of forecasts (Polish, German, Austrian and the forecast included in the Report of the European Commission) concerning the flow of labour force in the context of future EU enlargement underline that there are no sufficient grounds for fears of a large migration wave. According to the expertise made by Professor Orłowski and Professor Zienkowski, within 10–12 years after the EU accession the size of migration from Poland will range between 400 and 800 thousand people depending on the rate of economic growth (assuming that behaviours of Poles do not differ significantly from behaviours of residents of South Europe countries; Zienkowski 2001).

According to the forecast presented by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, within the coming twenty years ca. 31–38 thousand persons will flow into Germany from countries, which will join the EU on first enlargement. However, the size of inflow will show a downward tendency (Report of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2000). The research findings of other German researchers (Boeri, Brüecker 2000) show that during the first years after the introduction of free movement of people ca. 335 thousand persons annually will flow from CEE countries to the European Union. The authors expect that ca. 35% of this number of people will be potential employees. However, the inflow will have a clear downward tendency. In the year 2010 it should be at the level of 150 thousand persons. Other German researchers made an estimation of the size of migration from four countries: Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Hungary between 1998–2017. On the basis of these estimations, the size of migration from Poland was estimated as not more than 925 thousand persons during 30 years (Kupiszewski 2001). This result is similar to estimations obtained by several German researchers. According to Brücker, Trübswetter and Weise (2000), the migration losses of Poland will reach 961 thousand persons until 2030.

According to the forecast made by the Academy of Science in Austria in 1997, the actual migration potential of Poland after the EU accession was estimated at 390 thousand persons (Kupiszewski 2001). The size of migration from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary will reach 700 thousand persons per annum.

Also the view of the European Commission on labour force migration from CEE countries is worth presenting. As it follows from the Commission documents, there are no sufficient grounds for fears of a large migration wave. In research conducted by the Commission services it is estimated that in 2005 the inflow of employees from new member countries will range between 120 and 150 thousand persons. Within the few next years it will grow to ca. 215 thousand persons annually, however in further future it will be declining (Gospodarcze..., 2001; Budnikowski 2000). The Commission report concludes

that consequences of EU enlargement on the labour market will be limited. The Commission's research findings show that in the future about two thirds of immigrants will flow to Germany, followed by Austria as the second target market (ca. 10% immigrants; Monitor Integracji Europejskiej, 2001). Nevertheless, even in this case the migration pressure will be moderate (immigrants will make up 1% and 1.9% of the working age population in Germany and Austria respectively; Gospodarcze..., 2001).

Simultaneously, the authors of research underline that the forecasted size of migration will not affect in a negative way the labour market in EU countries for the following reasons:

- Increasing ageing of the European society is observed. Maintaining labour supply at a constant level in current EU member countries will require an inflow of ca. half a million people per annum throughout the 2005–2010 period, and even 1.6 million people annually between 2010 and 2015 (Monitor Integracji Europejskiej, 2001).
- As a result of a complete opening of markets, a considerable inflow of capital to CEE countries will take place, and consequently a migration process of certain groups of employees from EU countries to candidate countries.
- It is expected that membership in the European Union will cause an increased growth of GDP in CEE countries. According to cautious estimates of the Commission services, the annual rate of GDP growth in these countries between 2005–2009 will be 4.6% (Gospodarcze..., 2001). A higher growth rate is to be generated by an increase in capital investment, employment, technological progress and productivity of production factors. Growth in labour productivity will translate into an increase in real wages. According to simulations carried out by Professor Orłowski, faster economic growth in Poland will lead to a gradual convergence of economic levels of Poland and EU countries and will to a significant degree contribute to a decrease in the migration pressure (Orłowski 2001).
- The integration of countries characterised by a relatively high relationship of labour costs to capital costs with countries characterised by a relatively high relationship of capital costs to labour costs will result in a movement of production factors and a change of relationship between labour costs and capital costs in both countries. Thus, capital will flow to CEE countries and people migrate to Western Europe. As a result of this process, after a certain time period the differences in prices of production factors between countries will level out and welfare will increase in both countries. Therefore, it is estimated that as a result of EU capital inflow, the number of work places generated in Poland by enterprises from the European Union will absorb a significant part of labour force.

Benefits, which Polish citizens will achieve from migrations will result from providing social security to migrants and their families at the level of the country, in which a migrating person performs work. For Polish employees, this solution will be advantageous, because in potential target countries for Poles these benefits are much better developed than in Poland. Also transfers of wages from abroad will bring benefits. Thus, the migration can be perceived as advantageous, which serves the improvement of economic results of the whole integrating region (Orłowski 2001).

Costs, which will probably be born by our economy, will be connected, firstly, with the need to secure social benefits to employees from current member countries. However, it is estimated that due to a relatively small number of foreigners working in Poland, these costs will not be high. Throughout the 1998–1999 period, the number of permissions to work in Poland issued to employees from four countries: USA, France, Germany and Great Britain amounted to ca. 17 thousand annually (Iglicka 2001). In addition, a free movement of people may result in flows out of Poland of highly skilled persons.

Summary

Summarising the analysis undertaken in this article, which concerned the influence of Poland's accession to the European Union in the field of social policy, attention should be paid to the problem of uneven distribution of costs and benefits over the time. The possibility of distribution over the time of costs and benefits on the basis of two scenarios is stressed (cf. Orłowski 2000, p. 24–25).

According to the first scenario, a strong increase in adjustment costs takes place during Poland's accession to the European Union. This results in a significant advantage of costs over benefits during the first years of membership. Therefore, it can be expected that acceleration of adjustment processes will bring effects in a shorter period.

The second scenario assumes a long-term distribution of the accession-related costs and benefits as a result of negotiated long transition periods. Although the adjustment costs will then be less severe and spread over the time, but also benefits from the adjustment processes will appear later.

The choice of scenario of adjustment processes is dependent on preferences of the society concerning the application of a „shock therapy”, which means the first scenario, or the distribution over a longer period the costs, but also the benefits. Some important problems with this choice are also

associated with an uneven distribution of costs and benefits in a regional layout, between various social groups and sections and divisions of economy.

The conducted estimates of costs and benefits connected with adjustments of the Polish labour legislation and social security to EU requirements assume an average period of adjustments of 5–7 years from the moment of obtaining membership (cf. Golinowska et al. 1999, p. 106–109). The results of the above estimates are given in Table 12.

Table 12. Costs and benefits associated with adjustments of Polish law to EU norms

Area	Maximum costs		Minimum costs		Benefit (negative cost)
	Public sector	Firms	Public sector	Firms	
Social security law	1,355.1	-	795.3	-	270.0
Individual labour law	317.5	872.1	54.1	361.5	-
Collective labour law	220.4	440.9	-	-	-
Directives regulating work health and safety (3 directives)	120.2	581.2	105.3	480.5	-
Total	2,013.3	1,894.1	954.7	842.0	270.0

Source: Golinowska et al. 1999, p. 107, Table 1.

As it follows from data in the table, the highest costs will be related with the implementation of EU norms in the field of work health and safety. They constitute about 1/3–1/5 of total costs and about half of costs for the enterprise sector. The costs for the enterprise sector will be higher than the costs born by the public sector. Another important item in the cost structure will be costs connected with providing guarantees of social security for migrating workers and their families (medical care, old-age and pension benefits and allowances). An essential growth in labour costs related with the shortening of a working time, the reduction of overtime hours and the extension of leaves should also be underlined. These costs may result in lower competitiveness of Polish enterprises, and give a negative effect in the form of a decrease in employment. Also the costs of execution of the principle of equal chances for men and women, which are difficult to assess, should be mentioned, although due to the signs of women discrimination in the labour market they should be taken into consideration. However, as many as 50 million euro have been allocated to member countries for the years 2001–2005 in order to implement activities that

stimulate equality of gender. After joining the European Union Poland will be able to apply for appropriate funds from this programme to realise the principle of equal rights for men and women.

The appearance of the above mentioned costs in the initial period of membership will be compensated by a number of benefits. These will mainly include more modern and effective solutions that result from adjustments of Polish law to *acquis communautaire*. They concern an introduction of more flexible forms of employment and working time, which in a longer term should translate into the growth of employment, the decrease in unemployment and the improvement of general working conditions. This should also lead to actual realisation of the principle of equal chances for men and women in the labour market. Benefit from the introduction of EU norms of work health and safety will be the lowering of the number of accidents at work and the decrease in absence resulting from the improvement of work conditions.

After Poland's accession to the European Union an increased inflow of foreign direct investment should be expected, which can play an important role in the processes of restructuring of economy and enterprises, stimulate the rise of their effectiveness and competitiveness, and the growth of employment and improvement of the living standard. A free movement of persons can lead to a further progress in achieving the social integration, an increase in employment and social security.

The implementation and realisation of EU social policy standards should be treated as a continuous process, based on a social dialogue with economic and social partners. This process is the chance for Polish economy. The application of basic social values means that European standards are implemented into the strategy of Poland's socio-economic development.

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